

Details

Designing Engaging Lessons for Students - Bonus Episode with The Achievery

In this episode, I chat with educator and librarian Shannon Miller to spotlight helpful tips for creating engaging lessons for students. We explore the process of finding standards-aligned resources and customizing them for students' needs with EdTech. You'll also hear about The Achievery, a free platform full of high-quality digital resources plus ways to use the ISTE standards as your lesson-planning guide!

Show notes: <https://classtechtips.com/2024/02/23/lessons-for-students-bonus/>

*Lessons for Students

Introduction

Hello there, my name is Monica Burns and welcome to today's bonus episode of the Easy EdTech Podcast!

If you're used to joining me on Tuesdays for new episodes, you are in for a treat. This is a special bonus episode of the podcast in partnership with The Achievery.

Just like on Tuesday, these bonus episodes are designed to give you ideas you can try yourself, share with a colleague, or bookmark for later in the school year.

If we mention something you'd like to check out, you'll find the link to it in the show notes. So don't forget to head to my website classtechtips.com/podcast for all of the links and resources from today's episode.

Intro Sponsor Message

This episode is sponsored by All4Ed's Future Ready Schools - Future Ready Schools is partnering with ATT to share "The Achievery," a free digital learning platform created by AT&T." Create your free account today at futureready.link/burns [REPEAT LINK] and start exploring all of the fantastic free resources they have for educators to customize for their students.

Today's Intro

Today's episode is titled "Designing Engaging Lessons for Students - Bonus Episode with The Achievery" and I talk with Shannon Miller, an educator and librarian who I have known for almost a decade. Shannon shares some fantastic tips for customizing lessons you find online, and we talk about the totally free platform full of great lessons and video resources for students called The Achievery. Let's dive into the conversation.

Episode Transcript

Monica Burns:

Welcome to the podcast, Shannon. I am so excited to chat with you about ways that we can design engaging lessons for students, finding really great resources. But before we jump into all of that, can you share a bit with listeners about your role in education? What does your day-to-day look like? Like,

Shannon Miller:

Hi Monica. It's so good to be here with you today. And I am actually a district teacher librarian at Van Meter Community School in Van Meter, Iowa. So I work with the kids in the library, but I also work with our teachers and our students in their classroom through collaboration and co-teaching and helping with all the things that we do, wear a lot of hats as librarians. And so really busy at my school and I work with all the kids in preschool to 12th grade, and so I'm super lucky to do that too.

Monica Burns:

And so with your perspective and seeing all the different grade levels of students and what students need and are interested and excited in, I'm really pumped for today's topic because we know that designing engaging lessons for students is so important at all grade levels. And how can educators make sure their lessons are relevant and engaging for students?

Shannon Miller:

Well, I think one of the biggest thing is to really look at, in my role, is to really look at what we're, you know, what we want to accomplish, all the great things that are out there for our kids, because there are so many things that really make the curriculum that we have to teach so much more exciting, engaging, and kind of that learning come to life and through collaboration that I do with the teachers, you know, that's one big thing that I do as a librarian

is come in and pull from these resources that we also have to, if it is either, you know, accompanying that or maybe it's something that is really highlighting a part of the lesson. And so it's great to have these things that we can kind of put in with the curriculum we already have Mm-Hmm. <Affirmative> to again, really make that learning come to life.

Monica Burns:

And just like you said, putting it in with the curriculum you already have what's on your to-do list, which you know, is important for students at a particular time of the year in the particular order within a course content that you're developing. So if teachers do find a great standards, align lesson online, how can they customize it for their students?

Shannon Miller:

Well, one thing that, you know, we do at my school is, you know, really look at maybe if we find something online is to look at how it fits into what we're doing and then pull out the pieces either that we have already taught, maybe we have to reteach them again, or maybe they, you know, are something that we can even kick the lesson off with too. But it doesn't mean that we have to teach, you know, even like the whole thing. It can be something that we pull those little pieces out that we really want to, you know, make, I think stand out to the kids. Maybe we want to, you know, reteach something or like I said, even just kick off the lesson. And so I think the, that's the neat thing about being able to find things online is it doesn't mean we have to do the whole thing. We can use that to really make our teaching and of course, the learning of our kids even, even better and more exciting.

Monica Burns:

That's such a great point because especially if we're searching for supplemental resources, we don't have to teach that with fidelity, right? Like we don't have to do every little bit in order to make the most of that resource. There might just be some gems in there, some little things that we know are going to resonate. Or like you mentioned, we might have already taught something that is very similar and now we are expanding upon it. So I think that when teachers are finding good things online, there's just so many ways they can make it work or they can customize it for their students. And you know, in addition to state or content area standards, many educators look towards the ISTE standards to guide their teaching. I've had lots of ISTE authors on the podcast. ISTE comes up often in conversations here. Can you tell us

a bit about the ISTE standards and why teachers might keep this in mind when looking for resources to share with their students?

Shannon Miller:

Yeah, absolutely. Well, and we use the ISTE standards and I, that's one thing I always have, like in my backpack when I'm going and pulling something out, if I'm collaborating with a teacher or even planning my own lessons and the ISTE standards, the great thing is, you know, I think not only pointing to that technology that we're using, but pointing to how we want our kids to be collaborative, how we want them to be creative and innovative, how we want them to communicate and even connect to like, you know, not only things within our school, but even globally. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>. And we look at those, that's, those are the kids that we're teaching. You know, those are our, our digital explorers that we have and our kids that how we really want to open up, you know, not only what we're doing within our school and our classrooms, but also throughout the world. And I think that that's something that I love about the ISTE standards is that we can really think globally and what can we bring to our kids in that sense too.

Monica Burns:

Yeah. Just that idea that there's so many avenues to consider inside of the ISTE standards and that global collaborators, right. That collaboration component is one that I think is, is really a standout because there is a lot students can do, especially with the access to technology they may have to connect, to share, to learn about students in other parts of the world. And you know, as we're talking about designing engaging lessons today, searching for high quality resources, I know I am always looking for free resources for teachers that fit into that high quality category. So I was super excited to check out The Achievery and share it on the blog earlier this year. And I'm curious as to what have you seen in the field as teachers use these resources, particularly the quick movie clips and the short videos?

Shannon Miller:

Yeah. I love The Achievery for, you know, being able to find whatever we're looking for in whatever category. If it's looking for a lesson in your social emotional learning, if it's sitting down and finding something in digital literacy or math, you can support that learning in every subject within The Achievery through the little videos and great lessons and just the topics that they have. And I think that that's something that, you know, our kids, they are, they love

video. Well, we all do, right? Yeah. <Laugh>. And that's what really hooks them. And so not only finding like those great little clips and the lessons that go along with it, but also some of the characters from like Warner Brothers or Cartoon Network. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>, maybe it is something that they've seen. Like in Girls Who Code or code.org, I love that those tie-ins with that content too.

Shannon Miller:

And the thing that I think is also really neat about The Achievery is that it's something that can, you know, maybe you're wanting to reteach a part of your, you know, something in your curriculum or maybe you're kicking something off these lessons and these little video clips, they oftentimes don't take a lot of time. And, and we can use these to pull out and to make that learning, I think even more fun. And there's something that can easily be worked into what we have to do within the classrooms because the teachers are busy and there's a lot of things that they have to cover. And so I love this because that is a really great way to partner up and with the Achievery, read some of these lessons and just really help, I think within the classroom that the kids, you know, get so excited about what you're using too.

Monica Burns:

Yeah. And you know, just all the different options. I think as I've been navigating the space and searching for things to share, I love how easy it is to go like category to category to look for different category different characters from favorite places. Kids might consume content already. I just really love how quick it is. Like you said, choose search for something that might be that little bit Right. That excites students around a topic. And you know, I know I highlighted a couple in my blog post from the cartoon networks, Craig of the Creek Creek from the Lego movie from Scoob Doo you have any favorites that you've shown or shared or, or ones that you like to point out to teachers when they're starting to search in this space for the first time?

Shannon Miller:

Yes. I mean, I love the ones that you mentioned, of course, like anything with a character that they know, Scooby-Doo, Wonder Woman, those are all great. Of course the ones that the code.org for mm-Hmm. You know, us and we just had Hour of Code back in December and, and scratch. Like, it's nice because some of those even go along with what we're already teaching and learning, but then there's so many new things. Like every time I log into The

Achievery, I see something new. Like today I saw that it said develop STEM skills with the MBA and I can't wait to check that. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>. And I knew that that partnership was coming up that they had with the MBA, but I love that they're always adding things and always working with like even more collaborators to be able to bring these things to all of us. And, and it's all free and that's the great thing.

Monica Burns:

Yeah. And it's, it's so funny you say that about the NBA resources. 'cause I noticed that when I had gone in recently that that was something new that had popped up at the top. But I think one thing that I also appreciate when looking at a space, you know, The Achievery has so much different types of content to search through, is that you can find things that connect back to a core content area. Something if you've maybe taught for a decade, you've taught right. 10 years in a row that has something that's really new and fresh. But then there are also resources even around topics like artificial intelligence or Right. AI and ethics or something. We might not have thought of teaching in the past two or three years, but now if we're feeling like we wanna include it, it's a really great place for those kind of resources too. And so I know those are things that jumped out to me after kind of spending some time poking around <laugh> and picking out a couple favorites.

Shannon Miller:

Yeah, that's a good point. And that's something too that even showing this at, like, I've been showing this too, like at, at conferences and having conversations with teachers and librarians about this. And I think that's one thing that I have heard is, you know, even the little lessons like within digital literacy and like media literacy, like those are topics that if we see it, we're like, oh, that'd be a great thing to teach our kids. And maybe we didn't think about that and how we can support that. And so these lessons and the little video clips will do a great job of being able to support that too. You mentioned the AI and I was excited about those because I think a lot of us are wondering like how we talk to our kids about that kind of mm-Hmm. <Affirmative> technology or new things. And so this gives us kind of that, you know, little kind of guide on the side that will really help not only our kids but also us learn about these things too.

Monica Burns:

Yeah, that's such a good point. Especially for topics that we might think of as, you know, being a co-learner with students or Right. We are learning about for the first time and then sharing it with a group of kids. And so yeah, I think that's one of the reasons some of those digital literacy pieces, right, the coding dot org ones you mentioned, the AI lessons. I just, I love how easy it is to do a keyword search on the platform <laugh>. So that makes it really straightforward and simple to, to find some great resources. So Shannon, can you tell us a bit more about The Achievery and how people can sign up and use this resource? It's free, so I wanna make sure they're able to get in and check it all out.

Shannon Miller:

Yeah. And so we'll include a link well I have to include that link, Monica, in the notes. You bet. Where to go for The Achievery, but it, like we said, it is totally free. So when you go in, you can sign up. If you use Google for example, just sign up with your Google and then you can get to all of these resources for free. This is one of my favorite things to share with my teachers and teachers and librarians all over because every teacher can get there for free. The other thing I really like is you get probably, I would say once a month, maybe twice a really great email from them that tells you new lessons. And I appreciate this because, you know, sometimes we get too many emails maybe about some kind of thing that we sign up for, but The Achievery does a great job because they highlight things that are new. And so look for those because those are really helpful. And then one thing that I do is I look at them myself, but I might even send those on to, you know, maybe it's a certain teacher that would like to use that in their classroom, or it's something that we could use at our whole school that's coming up that we can celebrate that learning. And so once you do sign up, you'll be able to get kind of reminders that there are new things too. So I really like that The Achievery does that as well.

Monica Burns:

That's such a great point too, especially for listeners of this podcast who may be in a coaching role or might support other educators in their school community just so they have a sense of what's new, what's going on, so they could maybe forward or share or just have that in their back pocket if they're having a mentoring conversation with someone too. Yeah. So I love that you pointed that out because it's just a great way to spotlight a few different resources without feeling, you know, completely overwhelmed <laugh> with, with what to do when you're in that space. So Shannon, this was so useful for educators who are thinking about standards, align lessons, who are curious about the ISTE standards, who want to jump into a

place like The Achievery and find some high quality customizable content for their students. So where can people connect with you? Where can they learn more about your work?

Shannon Miller:

Yeah, you can find me online @shannonmmiller on X and Instagram. And then my blog is called The Library Voice. So it's just thelibraryvoice.com. And I write about things like The Achievery and things from the library and school and all kinds of different topics. And so I would love to have you follow me too. So thank you so much for having me today, Monica.

Monica Burns:

Oh, thank you so much for all of these actionable great tips for listeners.

So let's make this EdTech easy with some key points from the episode...

Look for standards-aligned resources.

Use the bits and pieces your students need.

Share engaging video resources with students.

Remember, you can find the shownotes and the full list of resources from this episode on classtechtips.com/podcast including all of the ways to connect with the team at The Achievery.

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Outro

This March we'll celebrate 5 years of the Easy EdTech Podcast. To help celebrate, I'm hoping you can do us a favor. Leave a rating or review for the podcast wherever you're listening today – Spotify will let you tap on the stars, and Apple Podcasts will let you tap on the stars and leave a one or two sentence review. A big thank you in advance for helping us get ready to celebrate this March!

Episode Resources

- Learn more about [The Achievery](#), a free K-12 online learning platform
- Check out Shannon's blog [The Library Voice](#)
- Connect with Shannon Miller on [Twitter/X](#) & [Instagram](#)
- [ISTE Standards | The Leader in Edtech Standards](#)